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Human resources management

Human resources management

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The report responds to the request of the General Assembly, in its resolution 51/226 of 23 April 1997, for information and/or action on a variety of subjects in the field of human resources management. Specifically, in the present report the Secretary-General provides information on the strategy for the management of human resources; delegation of authority; simplification and streamlining of personnel rules and procedures; staff-management consultative mechanisms; practices of Member States relative to national staff representation; proposals on the introduction of a probationary period for successful candidates in the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories; the question of geographical imbalance resulting from promotions of successful candidates in the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories; career development policy; linguistic qualifications in the context of the performance appraisal system and the recruitment and promotion policy; the feasibility of holding the national competitive examination in the six official languages; mobility; efforts to achieve the level of 70 per cent of permanent appointments in posts subject to geographical distribution; detailed proposals for the implementation of a dual-track system of career and non-career appointments; the hiring of retirees and the hiring and use of consultants; in addition to other issues, including performance management, gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities, personnel provided on a non-reimbursable basis and reporting on human resources management.

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Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–4	3
II.	Strategy for the management of human resources	5	4
III.	Delegation of authority	6–31	4
IV.	Simplification and streamlining of all personnel rules and procedures	32–33	8
V.	Staff-management consultative mechanisms	34–37	8
VI.	Practices of Member States relative to national staff representation	38–43	9
VII.	Proposals on the introduction of a probationary period for successful candidates in the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories	44–46	9
VIII.	Question of geographical imbalance resulting from promotions of successful candidates in the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories	47–49	10
IX.	Career development policy	50–55	10
X.	Linguistic qualifications in the context of the performance appraisal system and the recruitment and promotion policy	56–63	11
XI.	Feasibility of holding the national competitive examination in the six official languages	64–71	12
XII.	Mobility	72–74	13
XIII.	Efforts to achieve the level of 70 per cent of permanent appointments in posts subject to geographical distribution	75–77	13
XIV.	Detailed proposals for the implementation of a dual-track system of career and non-career appointments	78–81	14
XV.	Hiring of retirees and the hiring and use of consultants	82–86	14
XVI.	Other issues	87–95	15
	A. Performance management	87–88	15
	B. Gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities	89–90	15
	C. Personnel provided on a non-reimbursable basis	91–94	15
	D. Reporting on human resources management	95	16

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to section VII of General Assembly resolution 51/226 of 25 April 1997, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the following 19 questions:

(a) *As soon as possible*

A family leave programme for United Nations staff;

(b) *At its resumed fifty-first session*

The findings of the review of the first cycle of the performance appraisal system;

(c) *At its fifty-second session*

(i) The appropriate action taken against personnel responsible for malpractices identified by the Board of Auditors;

(ii) Comprehensive policy guidelines on consultants, to be submitted through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions;

(d) *At its fifty-third session*

(i) Information on measures taken to ensure equitable representation of Member States at the senior and policy-making levels of the Secretariat, to be included in the report on the composition of the Secretariat;

(ii) The full implementation of the strategy for the management of the human resources of the Organization;

(iii) Delegation of authority;

(iv) The simplification and streamlining of all personnel rules and procedures;

(v) Staff-management consultative mechanisms;

(vi) The practices of Member States relative to national staff representation;

(vii) Proposals on the introduction of a probationary period for successful candidates in the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories;

(viii) The question of geographical imbalance resulting from promotions of successful candidates in the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other countries;

(ix) Career development policy;

(x) Linguistic qualifications in the context of the performance appraisal system and the recruitment and promotion policy;

(xi) The feasibility of holding the national competitive examinations in the six official languages, including proposals to ensure that nationals of Member States whose mother tongue is not an official language of the United Nations are not placed at a disadvantage;

(xii) Mobility;

(xiii) The efforts made by the Secretary-General to achieve the level of 70 per cent of permanent appointments in posts subject to geographical distribution;

(xiv) Detailed proposals for the implementation of a dual-track system of career and non-career appointments;

(xv) The hiring of retirees and the hiring and use of consultants.

2. The General Assembly requested that the first four reports be submitted at its resumed fifty-first or fifty-second sessions. Three of these reports have been submitted, as documents A/52/438 (family leave programme), A/C.5/51/55 and Corr.1 (first cycle of the performance appraisal system) and A/53/385 (hiring and use of consultants in the Secretariat). With regard to action taken against personnel responsible for malpractices identified by the Board of Auditors, document A/52/864 was submitted to the fifty-second session of the Assembly. The remaining reports are presented below in the order they were requested by the Assembly. At its fifty-first session, the Assembly also adopted decision 51/408 on the employment of retirees, decision 51/456 on human resources management, resolution 51/243 of 15 September 1997 and decision 51/466 on gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities and decision 51/471 on the status of redeployed staff members. At its fifty-second session, the Assembly adopted resolution 52/219 of 22 December 1997 on human resources management.

3. Since the enunciation in 1994 and 1996 of a strategy for the management of the human resources of the Organization,[1] the Secretary-General has set out a programme for reform, designed to renew the United Nations, which includes initiatives to strengthen the management systems of the Organization.[2] In its resolution 52/12 A of 12 November 1997, the General Assembly called for action on a variety of aspects of that report, including in the area of management. Specifically in the area of human resources management, the Secretary-General established

a Task Force on the Reform of Human Resources Management, early in 1998, to advise him on specific initiatives for renewal. The work on reform by the Task Force builds on the earlier strategy and advances it in a number of specific directions. The report of the Secretary-General on management reform, including that in the area of human resources, which draws on the work of that Task Force, will be submitted to the General Assembly during its fifty-third session.

4. A number of the issues on which the General Assembly had requested reports in resolution 51/226 and in the subsequent resolutions and decisions set out above are taken up under the broader umbrella of management reform. Information on measures taken to ensure equitable representation of Member States at the senior and policy-making levels of the Secretariat, is contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/53/375). In deciding on appointments at the senior and policy-making levels, the Secretary-General takes into account primarily the qualifications and experience of candidates in posts at the Assistant Secretary-General and Under-Secretary-General levels, as well as ungraded officials, along with due importance given to equitable regional representation and gender consideration. For appointments at the D-1 and D-2 levels, vacancy announcements are circulated internally and externally to reach the largest possible pool of potential applicants. Appointments are made in accordance with procedures which include review by the Appointment and Promotion Board for posts at the Principal Officer level and by a Senior Review Group for posts at the Director level.

II. Strategy for the management of human resources

5. The General Assembly, in paragraph 2 of section I of resolution 51/226, urged the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to ensure the implementation of the strategy and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-third session. Since the progress report presented by the Secretary-General in 1996, the strategy has become part of the initiatives for renewal of the Organization. The Task Force, on the Reform of Human Resources Management thoroughly reviewed the United Nations approach to human resources management in the light of widespread changes which have taken place in the 1990s in the private and public sectors of industrial and developing economies. Human resources management has to be viewed in the context of the overall reform of the Organization. The Secretary-General, in a separate report to be submitted to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, will set out a number of issues which continue to drive change. Some of those issues were contained in the original strategy and are being reinforced, others represent new dimensions of change management.

III. Delegation of authority

6. The General Assembly, in paragraph 6 of section II of resolution 51/226, welcomed the intention of the Secretary-General to streamline administrative procedures and eliminate duplication, in relation to human resources management, through delegation of authority to programme managers. It requested him to ensure, before delegating such authority, that well-designed mechanisms of accountability, including the necessary internal monitoring and control procedures, as well as training, were put in place.

7. The programme for reform set out by the Secretary-General in 1997 to renew the United Nations includes actions to strengthen the management systems of the Organization.[2] Central to those actions in management reform is the concept that performance improves when the people who are closest to the work have managerial authority and responsibility delegated directly to them, together with accountability for achieving results.

8. The strategy for the management of the human resources of the Organization enunciated in 1994 and 1996[1] stressed the need for the decentralization of functions and the delegation of authority to line managers, coupled with measures to ensure accountability. Similarly, the delegation of authority and responsibility is a prominent element in the framework for the reduction and refocusing of non-programme costs.[3]

9. In 1993, the General Assembly endorsed the establishment of a system of accountability and responsibility, which included the following elements:[4]

(a) Establishment of clear responsibility for programme delivery, including performance indicators as a measure of quality control; such indicators are being developed for use with results-based budgeting for the biennium 2000–2001;

(b) A mechanism ensuring that programme managers are accountable for the effective management of the personnel and financial resources allocated to them;

(c) Performance evaluation for all officials, including senior officials, with objectives and performance

indicators; the development of the Performance Appraisal System (PAS) is an essential part of this evaluation process;

(d) Effective training of staff in financial and management responsibilities: the first phase of people management training has been completed for over 900 managers (P-4–D-2 levels).

10. A comprehensive and effective system of delegation of authority rests on three premises: *responsibility* being clearly defined; managers and staff having the *resources* and *authority* to carry out their respective responsibilities effectively; and *accountability* being established at all levels through appropriate mechanisms.

11. The last premise – accountability – is the focus of the present report. Clearly, there are many levels of accountability in the Organization. The Secretary-General, at the highest level, is accountable to policy-making organs for the implementation of mandated programmes, through the programme performance report, in-depth evaluation studies and the programme budget performance report. At the level of the medium-term plan and the programme budget, programme managers are accountable for programme delivery under the strategic objectives mandated by Member States. Management plans serve as monitoring tools for the specific objectives that guide the work programmes of organizational entities. At a third level, individual staff are accountable for the delivery of outputs and services, as agreed under the PAS framework between manager and staff.

12. In the area of human resources management, the mechanisms of accountability may be seen in a hierarchy, matched at each level against specific delegated responsibilities and authorities. At the highest level, the legislative bodies articulate mandates and overall policy guidance to the Secretary-General for the discharge of these mandates and those entrusted directly to him by the Charter of the United Nations. In turn, the Secretary-General is accountable for the development of strategic objectives, for the execution of legislative mandates and for administering the Secretariat. At the next level, the Secretary-General sets goals and objectives for the implementation of mandates by programme managers (heads of departments/offices). He delegates responsibility and authority for the administration of human resources, through the Under-Secretary-General for Management, to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management. The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management is accountable for policy advice, the management of the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) and the effective governance and management of human resources throughout the Secretariat, in support of programme managers.

13. The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management sets objectives for human resources management and, on behalf of the Secretary-General, may delegate responsibility and authority for particular activities to programme managers, who remain accountable for specific performance under that delegation. Programme managers, in turn, may delegate administrative tasks to an executive office, to ensure compliance with the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations. Executive offices are accountable to programme managers for the delivery of support services and to the Assistant Secretary-General in respect of compliance. Lastly, within departments, responsibility and authority are delegated to individual staff for the extension of specific tasks and the provision of specific services: through the PAS they are accountable for their performance, including meeting work standards.

14. Delegation of authority in human resources management is set out in administrative instruction ST/AI/234/Rev.1 of 22 March 1989. The instruction sets out the authority required for decisions in the administration of the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules 101.1 to 112.7, in accordance with the principles contained in the bulletin of the Secretary-General ST/SGB/151 of 7 January 1976. It defines the difference between a direct application of the Staff Rules (cases where it is mandatory that a specific action be taken when particular conditions are met) and a discretionary decision (cases where an action may or may not be taken within the terms and conditions set out in a rule and with respect to the particular circumstances of a case). An exception to a staff rule occurs in cases where a decision to take a specific action can only be authorized if a particular condition laid down in the rule is waived. Exceptions normally are made by the Secretary-General (staff rule 112.2 (b)); in some cases a rule in itself allows an action to be taken under exceptional circumstances and a decision to take the action is a discretionary one rather than an exception.

15. Different levels of authority are defined in ST/AI/234/Rev.1; some matters are reserved to the Secretary-General, others are within the authority of the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, the Controller, the heads of substantive departments or offices or the Heads of Offices away from Headquarters. In practice, a number of decisions reserved to the Secretary-General are taken by the Under-Secretary-General for Management, to whom the Secretary-General

may delegate from time to time such authority in these matters as he deems advisable.

16. At the level of individual departments or offices, in order that senior managers may be held accountable, a balance is needed between the authority managers must have over all resources available to them for the implementation of their programmes and the authority delegated to the administrative entities that support departments. Human resources staff in executive offices (Headquarters) or divisions of administration (Offices away from Headquarters) have dual responsibilities and accountability: to the head of department or office to provide support services for programme/project implementation; and to the Department of Management for the administration of the Staff Regulations and Rules and the Financial Rules and Regulations governing the use of resources.

17. All exceptions to the Staff Rules require the authorization of the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management. Discretionary decisions are normally taken by the Secretary-General or the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, rather than coming within the purview of the head of a department or office. Direct application of Staff Rules is normally the responsibility of the executive or administrative officer of the department or office.

18. All decisions or actions affecting staff under the Staff Rules must be recorded, that is, decisions should be both considered and documented in official status files. This applies whether or not the decision is a direct application of the rules or a discretionary one. Exceptions are currently logged in a record maintained by OHRM.

19. With regard to monitoring of compliance with the Staff Rules, OHRM should monitor both their direct and discretionary application to ensure that they are in conformity with the established policies and procedures of the Organization. The Office of Human Resources Management should also provide guidelines and advice to assist in the interpretation of the Staff Rules.

20. Since 1989, a number of significant delegations of authority in the area of human resources have been granted within the framework of ST/AI/234/Rev.1, notably to the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna, to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Field Administration and Logistics Division in respect of peacekeeping operations, to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and, most recently, in a pilot project to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. Although no specific delegation of authority was made when the United Nations Office at Nairobi was established, the Office enjoys a de facto delegation of authority in line with the broader delegation of responsibility enjoyed by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme. These delegations of authority reflect the Secretary-General's decision to empower managers and to reduce the layers of centralized administration, that is, to move from less central control to a more flexible and decentralized system in which individual managers are both more involved and more accountable. The Office of Human Resources Management increasingly is focusing on strategic or policy issues and the new approaches needed to meet the changing priorities of the Organization; performance management, career development, gender balance. At the same time, OHRM monitors the global application of guidelines and standards, application of the Staff Regulations and Rules, application of the specific terms of General Assembly resolutions and common system elements.

21. Recent delegations of authority have focused on three priority areas: classification, administration of benefits and recruitment. Quarterly reports constitute the main internal monitoring mechanism and, at the same time, offer control procedures. The Office of Human Resources Management maintains responsibility for central reporting to intergovernmental bodies. From time to time, management audits are carried out of the various delegated human resource management and personnel functions. Training both in managerial skills and on specific technical issues has been initiated. Rotation of staff will promote such training within the occupational field of human resources management, subject to the availability of funds, and will improve the consistency of application of the Staff Regulations and Rules across departments and offices.

22. The activation of release 2 of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) offers a new tool for monitoring delegated authority and a number of control procedures for the administration of entitlements. The desk procedures developed for Release 2 provide, for the first time, an automated template of standard practice. It is anticipated that these desk procedures will be supplemented by a repertory of practice and/or an on-line reference manual, which will help to standardize the administration of entitlements.

23. Under the aegis of the Task Force on the Reform of Human Resources Management, a comprehensive review of the existing delegated authorities in human resources management has been initiated. An extensive discussion of delegation of authority and related mechanisms of accountability also took place between management and

staff representatives at the twenty-second session of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee in May 1998.

24. Mechanisms of accountability provide tools that foster informed, well-documented and reasoned decisions, which are synonymous with professionalism and effective management, are in conformity with the Staff Regulations and Rules and which eliminate the phenomenon of responsibility being diluted to vagueness as to who is responsible and for what. The mechanisms are predicated on decisions by managers being:

(a) Informed – the manager must establish the facts of a case and be cognizant of the relevant Staff Regulations, Rules and established policies;

(b) Documented – the manager must be able to substantiate a decision;

(c) Reasoned – the manager must be able to set out, upon request, the rationale for the decision.

The lack of these three elements may result in arbitrary decisions, on the basis of which the United Nations Administrative Tribunal may be obliged to award damages. Training managers in what constitutes a sound decision for administrative purposes is thus crucial, as is access to expert advice.

25. The delegation of authority and measures of accountability should address the following questions:

(a) What are the obligations incumbent upon the manager to whom authority has been delegated, in terms of how staff are managed and specific objectives;

(b) What discretionary authority does the manager have in responding to delegated responsibilities;

(c) What kind of centralized support can be provided by OHRM (policy guidelines, help-desk functions, training);

(d) What kind of monitoring and follow-up by OHRM will take place and based on what criteria;

(e) What kind of documents should be available to substantiate decisions in the audit and oversight trail;

(f) What potential rewards or sanctions result from exceptional, satisfactory or sub-standard performance of delegated functions?

26. One mechanism of accountability is to establish a form of work contract which sets out the responsibilities incumbent on both parties. The terms of the contract can be linked to the individual PAS of the staff member to whom responsibility is given. His/her ability to undertake delegated responsibilities against set work standards and performance indicators would determine the performance rating.

27. Such a work contract should take into account the following principles:

(a) Decisions should be taken within the discretion afforded a manager under a specific delegation of authority, on the basis of clearly identified facts and in the context of the manager's organizational environment;

(b) Clear criteria should be set out for the execution of decisions of direct application, for which provision of extensive documentation is not necessary;

(c) Once authority has been delegated, it would not be necessary to report every decision to the central office, in this case OHRM;

(d) All exceptions to the Staff Rules should be reported, with explanations for the basis of such decisions.

28. A second mechanism of accountability is periodic management review or follow-up. These reviews will assess practice in a particular office or by a particular manager or managers, to determine whether the responsibilities delegated have been discharged in a satisfactory manner against agreed criteria or standards. Five internal control measures or standards are of use in this regard:

(a) Reasonable assurance: the cost of a control or measure should not exceed its benefit. This means that managers are required to exercise discretionary judgement and to accept consequences for the associated risk;

(b) Documentation of all significant events or transactions: documentation should be readily available for examination and be timely, accurate and complete;

(c) Accountability for the human resource consequences of decisions;

(d) Separation of duties: no one staff member should control all key aspects of an event or transaction. For example: the responsibility for recording and accounting for personnel transactions should be separate from the certifying authority; documentation of decisions should be separate from the decision-making authority;

(e) Regular rotation of duties: to achieve transparency in a given function.

29. The last mechanism of accountability rests in regular reporting derived from monitoring and follow-up procedures. As OHRM delegates day-to-day administrative events to programme managers, it will remain responsible for analysing trends and patterns in human resources management. Reports generated by IMIS will provide a means of:

(a) Comparing data on a global basis;

(b) Comparing human resources and financial information, for example with regard to post management;

(c) Spot checking compliance with guidelines and policy criteria.

30. With regard to the question of sanctions of officials who have received a delegation of authority but have not complied with its terms, it is the intention of the Secretary-General to explore the possibility of establishing a management review panel. Such a panel, made up of senior managers, would have the responsibility for reviewing specific cases of non-compliance with the delegated authority and would make recommendations to the Secretary-General as to the appropriate sanctions to be imposed. The establishment of such a panel would meet the concerns of the General Assembly, as expressed in paragraph 3 of section II of resolution 51/226.

31. As part of the process of delegation of authority and the establishment of mechanisms of accountability, training will be needed both for programme managers and executive personnel who carry out delegated authority, as well as for OHRM staff who will monitor and follow up on the delegation. It is planned that such training should become part of the broader effort to change the management culture of the Organization.

IV. Simplification and streamlining of all personnel rules and procedures

32. In paragraph 7 of section II of resolution 51/226, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to expedite the simplification and streamlining of all personnel rules and procedures in order to make them transparent and easier to apply and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-third session.

33. The work done so far to simplify, rationalize and modernize the Staff Rules has been focused on the areas where reform was urgently needed, as is the case for the rules governing education grant, mobility and hardship allowance, sick leave, unaccompanied shipments and removal costs. The new Staff Rules will be presented to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, to become effective on 1 January 1999. Related administrative instructions, consolidating and simplifying those now in force, are scheduled to become effective at the same time. ST/SGB/1997/1 of 28 May 1997, which introduced new procedures and a new format for administrative issuances, entered into force on 1 June 1997. Thirty obsolete bulletins of the Secretary-General were abolished by ST/SGB/1997/4 of 15 September 1997. All new administrative instructions are drafted to consolidate and simplify existing rules and to systematically abolish prior rules dispersed in a variety of instruments. Thus, the consolidated instruction on the classification of posts will abolish 24 prior instructions, circulars and directives. At the same time, the Working Group on Staff Administration of the Secretary-General's Task Force on the Reform of Human Resources Management has examined a series of procedures in conjunction with Release 2 of IMIS, with a view to simplifying and automating administrative processes, particularly in the area of entitlements. An exposition of work in progress in the area of staff administration is contained in the report of the Secretary-General on management reform to be submitted to the General Assembly during its fifty-third session.

V. Staff-management consultative mechanisms

34. In paragraph 12 of section II of its resolution 51/226, the General Assembly recognized the fact that staff representatives were entitled to an opportunity for career advancement, decided that the period of their continuous release should not exceed four years and also decided to limit such release to elected staff representatives only, on either a full-time or a part-time basis.

35. The decisions of the General Assembly have been implemented as follows: the limitations placed by the resolution affect elected staff representatives acting in that capacity under article VIII of the Staff Regulations and chapter 8 of the Staff Rules, and not staff elected to serve in other capacities, for instance as members of the Joint Appeals Board or the Joint Disciplinary Committee.

36. The decision to limit the period of continuous release was to be applied prospectively, without affecting the validity of the mandate of staff representatives who had been released for four years or longer when the decision was adopted on 3 April 1997. The limit was applied only to those standing for election after that date and who, if elected, would again be released full-time or part-time to discharge their duties in accordance with the formula recommended by the Staff Management Consultative Committee in 1995 and approved by the Secretary-General, as reported to the General Assembly in document A/C.5/50/64 (paras. 8 and 9).

37. Under the formula recommended by the Staff Management Consultative Committee, all staff representatives are released from their other official duties for the purpose of discharging their staff representational

activities, either on a full-time or on a part-time basis. A literal reading of the resolution could have led to the conclusion that, after four years of being released, staff representatives could not again stand for election since their election would lead to further release. This interpretation, however, may have been unnecessarily restrictive. The rationale for the time limitation imposed by the General Assembly was the need to protect the career development of staff representatives. After four years, during which staff representatives would have discharged their functional duties only partly or not at all, the staff representatives would have to resume performance of duties unrelated to staff representation on a full-time basis, so as to compete for vacant posts on the same terms as other staff. In that light, and taking into account the fact that staff representatives serving on an executive committee have, in practice, much more demanding obligations and commitments than those who do not, application of the time limit was limited to those staff representatives whose service on an executive committee had led to full-time or part-time release for at least four years, after which those staff representatives would resume regular functions unrelated to staff representational activities on a full-time basis.

VI. Practices of Member States relative to national staff representation

38. In paragraph 13 of section II of resolution 51/226, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the practice of Member States relative to the financing of national staff representation and on the proportion of representation of staff.

39. On 12 November 1997, the Secretary-General, in a note verbale addressed to all Member States, requested the submission of relevant information on the practice of their national civil service relative to the financing of national staff representation and on the proportion of representation of staff.

40. In response to the above request by the Secretary-General, replies were received from a total of 16 Member States, including replies from Permanent Missions stating that the request for information had been forwarded to their Governments.

41. Among the detailed replies received, most Member States noted that the right to freedom of association was guaranteed for members of their national civil service in the promotion and defence of their social and professional rights and interests. Some Member States reported that currently there was no organized system of national staff representation in their civil service, while one Member State noted that staff representation was performed on an ad hoc, part-time basis.

42. Regarding the financing of national staff representation, some Member States noted that funding for staff representation and elected staff representatives was provided through the national budget (on average for one elected staff representative per 1,000 employees). Other Member States noted that funding for staff representation was provided exclusively through union dues. All Member States reporting on national staff representation noted that facilities for staff representation were provided by the Administration, in varying degrees. Some Member States also reported on regulations for the full-time or part-time release of elected staff representatives and recognition of accumulated service for such personnel.

43. Two Member States submitted detailed information on their extensive national legislation regarding joint staff-management machinery in their national civil service and their *modus operandi*, including regulated collective bargaining. Both Member States emphasized the established place of such mechanisms in their civil service and their contribution towards an effective national civil service.

VII. Proposals on the introduction of a probationary period for successful candidates in the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories

44. The General Assembly, in paragraph 22 of section III.B of resolution 51/226, requested the Secretary-General to make proposals on the introduction of a probationary period for successful candidates in the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories.

45. In document A/C.5/51/34 of 22 November 1996, the Secretary-General reported on the ratio between career and fixed-term appointments, in which he proposed the introduction of a system of career and non-career tracks, with new types of appointment. The Secretary-General is of the view that it would be useful for all staff at the entry level of the Professional category of staff to serve a probationary period. He would recall that such a provision already applies to language staff. To ensure equal treatment of entrants, it

would be preferable that probationary arrangements apply both to staff recruited through the national competitive examination and to successful candidates in the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories.

46. This matter has been subsumed in the work-in-progress in human resources management as a result of the Task Force, set up in the context of the Secretary-General's proposals for reform. It is therefore proposed that it be pursued in the broader perspective of the contractual arrangements which would underpin a dual-track system of career and non-career appointments.

VIII. Question of geographical imbalance resulting from promotions of successful candidates in the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories

47. The General Assembly, in paragraph 23 of section III.B of its resolution 51/226 of 25 April 1997, requested the Secretary-General to report on the question of geographical imbalance resulting from promotions through the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories to posts subject to geographical distribution.

48. For the period from 1990 to 1997 inclusive, a total of 136 promotions to the Professional category have taken place through the competitive examination, an average of 17 a year. Candidates from 40 countries have been promoted, and 61 per cent of the successful candidates are female staff members. One country (Belize) changed its status from unrepresented to under-represented as a result of promotion through the competitive examination. No change took place in the number of under-represented countries. Similarly, there has been no change in status of 12 countries whose nationals have been promoted as a result of the examination and which have the status of within range-below midpoint (Antigua and Barbuda, Austria, El Salvador, France, Greece, Grenada, Guinea, Haiti, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America). Fourteen countries with the status of within range-above midpoint did not change their status as a result of promotions consequent on the examination (Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Egypt, Ireland, Jamaica, Liberia, Senegal, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden and the Syrian Arab Republic). Seven countries with the status of over-represented (Chile, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines and Thailand) did not change status as a result of the examination, but four countries in this category (Guyana, India, Pakistan and Trinidad and Tobago) did so.

49. The Secretary-General notes that promotions as a result of the competitive examination represent 5 per cent of total annual promotions in the Secretariat. Only in five cases was the representative status of a Member State changed, as indicated above, by such promotions, over an eight-year period. Geographical imbalance arising from promotions through the competitive examination remains minimal. The status of the 12 countries with multiple successful candidates did not change; eight of these countries remained over-represented.

IX. Career development policy

50. In paragraph 1 of section III.D of resolution 51/226, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to establish a career development policy in the Secretariat as soon as possible and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-third session.

51. In the context of the Secretary-General's strategy for the management of human resources of the Organization and his reform agenda, the purpose of career development is to build and maintain a highly competent, multi-skilled and versatile international civil service capable of meeting the Organization's present and future needs and, in so doing, to meet the development needs and career aspirations of individual staff members.

52. The Organization's career development policy is based on the principle that responsibility for career growth and development is shared: by the Organization, which must provide structural support and a framework of opportunities; by managers, who must support their staff's development and career progress; and by staff members, who must be committed to continuous professional growth.

53. In an environment of rapid and unpredictable change, rigid hierarchies, static organizations and careers built on a narrow set of skills are becoming obsolete. Flexibility, mobility and commitment to lifetime learning are essential for the Organization to meet changing demands and ever-evolving mandates. The Organization is in the process of identifying the core competencies required of all staff and managers to serve as a basis for all human resources systems.

In this context, the Organization is also strengthening staff development opportunities and career support mechanisms designed to empower staff to plan and manage their professional growth and career development, including mechanisms to facilitate mobility across functions, departments, duty stations and organizations of the United Nations system. In view of the critical role of managers in developing staff and leading change, special emphasis is being placed on building the Organization's leadership and managerial capacity.

54. The Secretary-General has made clear his expectation that managers are to support their staff's development and career progress by providing on-the-job training, coaching and mentoring, analysing the development needs of staff, encouraging staff to take advantage of opportunities and providing feedback to improve staff's performance and foster their growth and development. Individual staff members are expected to be flexible, mobile and proactive in pursuing their development by taking advantage of opportunities available to them and committing themselves to professional excellence and continuous learning. The Secretary-General has committed himself, in turn, to promoting a culture where excellence and continuous learning are valued and expected and where merit, productivity and achievement are rewarded.

55. Measures being undertaken to implement this career development policy are outlined in the Secretary-General's report on human resources management reform, which will be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session..

X. Linguistic qualifications in the context of the performance appraisal system and the recruitment and promotion policy

56. The General Assembly, in paragraph 3 of section III.D of resolution 51/226, requested the Secretary-General to report at its fifty-third session on how linguistic qualifications are taken into account in the PAS and the recruitment and promotion policy, including for language staff.

57. Among the various aspects of performance management covered by the PAS, the linguistic performance and continued development of linguistic skills of United Nations staff members are considered critical. It is essential that, in formulating the goals of the department and in the consultative framework for establishing and carrying out individual work plans, the uses of the working and official languages are taken into account.

58. For United Nations staff members who are recruited for their special language skills in the official languages of the Organization, linguistic abilities are pertinent to all aspects of work and performance. For their continuous learning and as a job-development goal, language staff are encouraged to develop their abilities through studies inside and outside the Organization to maintain and enhance their linguistic skills. Many language staff add additional official languages to their areas of expertise by studying and mastering other official languages in the language programme at their duty station, thus improving their effectiveness within the Organization.

59. In the PAS work plan, managers and supervisors specify what they are doing to contribute to the development of staff and, in the case of job-related development, each staff member indicates the linguistic studies they are pursuing.

60. Competitive examinations for posts requiring specific language skills, as indicated in ST/AI/1998/7 of 23 March 1998, are held to recruit Professional staff to fill vacancies for language posts which require specialists in the official languages. Candidates recruited through the national competitive examination process must choose to take the examination in either of the two working languages. Regional commissions and field missions, where an additional working language is used, include this linguistic requirement in their vacancy announcements.

61. As specified in ST/AI/413 of 25 March 1996, linguistic proficiency is one of the seven criteria for promotion of staff and it is taken into consideration by reviewing bodies. Internal and external vacancy announcements state the specific linguistic requirements needed for the vacant post. The linguistic qualifications should reflect those specified in the job description of the post.

62. To be considered for promotion, applicants must meet the linguistic criteria required to carry out the functions of the post. Information on language proficiency certification and the date obtained is also included in the profile of the applicants. When submitting the screened list of candidates for vacancies to departments for their consideration, OHRM draws the programme manager's attention to General Assembly resolution 50/11 of 2 November 1997 and ST/IC/1995/73 of 8 November 1995 on multilingualism and points out that this particular factor should be taken into account in conjunction with the final selection.

63. Language courses in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are offered to promote linguistic balance and respect for multicultural diversity as mandated by General Assembly resolutions 2480 B (XXIII) of 21 December 1968, 43/244 D of 21 December 1988 and 50/11. Special language and communication skills courses in the official languages maintain, refresh and further develop the competencies of United Nations staff members in meeting the current and future needs of the Organization. As stated in information circular ST/IC/1996/2 of 9 January 1996, staff members are encouraged to make use of the language training facilities available to them. In 1997, 8,217 participants studied in language courses, 3,439 at Headquarters and 4,778 at Offices away from Headquarters. To further promote the use of official languages within the Organization, language incentives are provided to staff who are successful in the proficiency examinations in the official languages. The examinations are conducted twice a year at over 100 sites throughout the United Nations system.

XI. Feasibility of holding the national competitive examination in the six official languages

64. In paragraph 4 of section III.D of resolution 51/226, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the feasibility of holding the national competitive examination in the six official languages, without prejudice to the mandatory knowledge of English and French as working languages.

65. General Assembly mandates have always guided the Secretariat in dealing with the issue of achieving linguistic balance, while ensuring that staff have sufficient knowledge of the working languages of the Secretariat, English and French, to perform their job functions.

66. In 1946, the General Assembly adopted the rule that English and French become the working languages of all organs of the United Nations with the exception of the International Court of Justice. Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Russian and, in 1973, Arabic were designated as official languages. Subsequent General Assembly resolutions established Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish as working languages of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and the regional commissions.

67. In resolution 2480 (XXIII) of 21 December 1968, the General Assembly decided that, effective 1 January 1970, the acceptable minimum language requirement "at the moment of recruitment" be the ability to use one of the working languages of the Secretariat (English or French). In resolution 35/210 of 17 December 1980 which, *inter alia*, provided mandates for recruitment at the P-1 and P-2 levels through competitive examinations and movement of staff from the General Service category to the Professional category exclusively through competitive examinations, the General Assembly decided that the testing methods consider the cultural and linguistic diversity of the United Nations membership and that written tests be in one of the official languages of the United Nations.

68. Further, in resolution 37/235 D of 21 December 1982, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to permit General Service candidates participating in competitive examinations for promotion to the Professional category to take the examination in any of the working languages of the regional commissions, with due regard to the proficiency requisite of the working languages of the Secretariat.

69. Taking into account the mandated policies of the Secretariat regarding language usage, language requirements as part of the recruitment process and language requirements as they apply to examinations and tests, OHRM has developed examinations and tests practices which take into account the cultural and linguistic diversity of Member States participating in the competitive examinations programme, while satisfying the Organization's need for recruitment of candidates with a strong knowledge of one of the two working languages of the United Nations.

70. Candidates are required to demonstrate a sound knowledge of English or French, the two languages in which the written and oral examination questions are posed. Candidates may write their answers to these questions in any one of the official languages of the Secretariat. However, candidates are required to answer one portion of the examination, the drafting exercise, in English or French. In the competitive examination for General Service staff members, staff may choose to take a language examination instead of completing the drafting exercise of the written examination in English or French. While they may choose to write examinations in any of the official languages of the Organization, all candidates are encouraged to write their answers to questions at the written stage in English or French, in order to further demonstrate their proficiency.

71. The oral component of both the recruitment and the promotion examination is conducted in English or French, thus requiring candidates to demonstrate a working knowledge of the spoken language. However, procedures are flexible at the stage of the oral component regarding the use of languages other than English or French. In the promotion

examination, a portion of the oral examination may be conducted in a language of a regional commission, while the interview component of the recruitment examination can also be conducted in any one of the official languages of the Organization. Thus, a flexible practice has evolved where candidates are given sufficient latitude to employ the official language of their choice, while demonstrating competence in the Organization's working languages, English or French.

XII. Mobility

72. In paragraph 7 of section III.D of resolution 51/226, the General Assembly noted that only modest progress had been made in achieving greater staff mobility for internationally recruited staff, as called for in the strategy for the management of the human resources of the Organization, and reiterated the importance of making substantive progress towards that objective. In paragraph 8 of the same section, it regretted that the report on mobility requested in section V, paragraph 2 of resolution 49/222 A of 23 December 1994 had not yet been submitted to the Assembly, and requested the Secretary-General to submit that report to the Assembly at its fifty-third session.

73. The issue of mobility has been reviewed in the context of the Organization's overall human resources reform efforts aimed at developing a stronger, more flexible, multi-skilled international civil service. It is clear that the needs of the Organization must be the paramount consideration when establishing policies and practices with regard to mobility. Unlike the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or the United Nations Children's Fund, the Secretariat is not a field-based organization with hundreds of offices around the world. It is, nevertheless, a global institution dealing with a wide range of complex and interrelated issues and requiring versatile staff with a broad range of experience, skills and knowledge. Mobility is therefore considered to be an important way of ensuring qualified staff ready and able to fill vacancies as they occur throughout the Organization, as well as a means of providing staff with opportunities to broaden their skills and knowledge and to acquire the competence required for career progression in the international civil service. It also enhances the consistent application of the Staff Regulations and Rules. In view of this, increased movement across functions, departments and duty stations, as well as across other organizations of the United Nations system, will benefit both the Organization and its staff.

74. Measures being undertaken to enhance mobility are described in the Secretary-General's report on human resources management reform to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session.

XIII. Efforts to achieve the level of 70 per cent of permanent appointments in posts subject to geographical distribution

75. In paragraph 2 of section V of resolution 51/226, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to make efforts to achieve the level of 70 per cent of permanent appointments in posts subject to geographical distribution and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-third session.

76. As reported in document A/C.5/51/34 of June 1996, there were 2,514 staff occupying posts subject to geographical distribution, that is staff recruited under the system of desirable ranges, out of a total Secretariat staff of 15,178. By June 1998, 2,400 staff had been recruited under the system of desirable ranges, out of a total Secretariat staff of 13,543. In 1996, the proportion of fixed-term appointments to career appointments (including probationary and permanent appointments) for staff occupying posts subject to geographical distribution, was 24.2 per cent; in 1998, the proportion had increased to 25.5 per cent. In 1996, the proportion of permanent appointments to the total number of staff recruited under the system of desirable ranges was 72 per cent (1,809 out of 2,514 staff). In 1998, the proportion had decreased to 70.3 per cent (1, 686 out of 2,400 staff). A distinct movement has taken place, therefore, towards achieving the level of 70 per cent of permanent appointments among staff, subject to the desirable ranges.

77. In this regard, it is recalled that the Secretary-General instituted a freeze on the granting of permanent appointments at the end of 1995. Since the adoption of resolution 51/226, that freeze has been maintained in order to achieve the 70 per cent level of permanent appointments set by the Assembly. It may be noted that, in paragraph 19 of section III.B of the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to offer or to continue to offer probationary appointments to all staff members who have passed a competitive recruitment examination and to consider all such staff members for conversion to permanent appointment after completion of the period of probationary service. The right thus conferred on this group of staff to be considered for permanent appointment at the end of their

probationary service works against an expeditious reduction to the 70 per cent level of permanent appointments set by the General Assembly.

XIV. Detailed proposals for the implementation of a dual-track system of career and non-career appointments

78. In section V, paragraph 4 of resolution 51/226, the General Assembly endorsed in principle the introduction of a dual-track system of career and non-career appointments and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its fifty-third session detailed proposals for the implementation of that system, including a definition of continuing core functions, with a full explanation of the manner in which such a definition would be applied and the text of any necessary amendments to the Staff Rules and Regulations required in order to implement the new system.

79. The background to, and proposal for, the introduction of a dual career/non-career track system, together with new types of appointment, were set out in the report of the Secretary-General on the ratio between career and fixed-term appointments to the fifty-first session.[5] The concept of a career service is an integral part of the work to reform the Organization. The Secretary-General strongly supports the concept as an element which underpins the independence of the international civil service, and which itself is a requirement of the Charter.

80. In resolution 51/226, the General Assembly underlined the importance of the concept of career service for staff members who perform continuing core functions. It also decided that considerations other than the length of service, such as performance, operational realities and post functions, should be taken into account at the threshold of permanency of appointment. On 31 July 1997, the Assembly adopted resolution 51/241 on the strengthening of the United Nations system, the annex of which states, *inter alia*:

> It is essential for the successful functioning of the Organization that it has a career international civil service for its core functions. There is also an important role for term contracts for various categories of staff. (para.70)

81. The Secretary-General's report on reform of human resources management, which will be submitted to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, deals with many aspects of human resources that will have a direct impact on career service and career development. As part of the overall process of reform, a major effort is also under way to fundamentally review, modernize and streamline the existing recruitment, placement and promotion system used for staff recruited under the 100 series of the Staff Rules. It is essential that any detailed proposal for a dual track system of career and non-career appointments be an integral part of these developments. The Secretary-General requests that consideration of such a system be postponed until it may be examined by the General Assembly as part of the overall process of reform of human resources management. As indicated in section VII above, the question of appropriate probationary arrangements for new entrants into the Professional category would also have to be taken into consideration.

XV. The hiring of retirees and the hiring and use of consultants

82. In paragraph 1 of section VI of resolution 51/226, the General Assembly expressed its concern about the practice of using consultants to carry out functions assigned to established posts and requested the Secretary-General to refrain from this practice. In paragraph 2 of the same section, it noted with concern the observations of the Board of Auditors that a number of findings warranted further investigation with a view to taking appropriate action against personnel responsible for such malpractice,[6] and requested the Secretary-General to take appropriate action in this regard and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. The actions to be taken against personnel in those cases where the preliminary investigation indicates that misconduct is well founded, that is, if the financial malpractice appears to constitute misconduct, is described in document A/52/864.

83. In paragraph 4 of section VI of resolution 51/226, the General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to prepare, no later than the end of 1997, comprehensive policy guidelines on the terms of reference (including objectives, targets, and output delivery dates), selection, hiring and renewal of consultants and ensuring transparency and objectivity in the selection process, and to submit those guidelines to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) for review before consideration by the General Assembly at its fifty-second session under the item entitled "Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors".

84. As reported by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management at the fifty-second session

of the Assembly, the report would be submitted to the fifty-third session, upon completion of the work of the Task Force on the Reform of Human Resources Management. The comprehensive policy guidelines have been submitted as document A/53/385.

85. In paragraph 7 of section VI of resolution 51/226, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendation of ACABQ that the Secretariat resume the past practice of submitting, on a biennial basis and in conjunction with the report requested by the Committee on the hiring of retired staff, a report on the hiring and use of consultants, following the format of past reports on the subject.[7]

86. The report on the hiring of retired staff and on the hiring and use of consultants for the biennium 1996–1997 will be submitted to the General Assembly during its fifty-third session.

XVI. Other issues

A. Performance management

87. The General Assembly, in paragraph 2 of section II of resolution 52/219 of 22 December 1997, encouraged the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to refine and simplify the Performance Appraisal System, in particular its administrative aspects; in paragraph 3 of the same section, the Assembly reiterated that it is important that the Performance Appraisal System be implemented consistently throughout the Secretariat, so as to achieve an effective and fair performance management and staff development tool, and requested the Secretary-General to monitor the application of the system and to report thereon to the Assembly.

88. The General Assembly, in paragraph 2 of section III of the same resolution, requested the Secretary-General to keep under review the introduction of the system of performance awards or bonuses and to report to the Assembly, in accordance with the step-by-step approach, at its fifty-third session. In paragraph 3 of the same section, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to its fifty-third session, for decision, policy proposals to deal systematically and effectively with under-performance,[8] taking into account the comments and recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission.[9] These issues have been addressed in document A/53/266.

B. Gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities

89. Further to paragraph 6 of resolution 51/243 of 15 September 1997, the Secretary-General has submitted quarterly reports, through ACABQ, on the acceptance of gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities (A/52/709 and Corr.1, A/C.5/52/43, A/C.5/52/51 and A/C.5/52/56).

90. The next quarterly report will cover the period 1 July 1998 to 30 September 1998 and will be combined with the annual report on the use of gratis personnel for the period 1 October 1997 to 30 September 1998. It will be submitted through ACABQ in October 1998, and will also address the other issues referred to in paragraphs 9 and 13 of resolution 51/243.

C. Personnel provided on a non-reimbursable basis

91. In paragraph 26 of section III.B of resolution 51/226, the Secretary-General was requested to extend to personnel provided on a non-reimbursable basis the practice of barring such personnel from applying for or being appointed to posts in the Secretariat for a period of six months of the end of their current service under non-reimbursable contracts.

92. This request was complied with in the recruitment of staff as a result of vacancy circulation in the Secretariat. However, in the recruitment for the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, which experienced a sharp increase in its work volume owing to a sudden increase in the number of detainees, and which, at the time, employed a number of key gratis personnel, both investigators and attorneys, that had developed unique knowledge about the cases being prepared, the Tribunal requested that an exception be granted to accept applications without a waiting period. In all other respects the Tribunal complied with the United Nations recruitment regulations and all applicants, including those who had formerly served on a non-reimbursable loan basis, were treated as competitive candidates.

93. The Prosecutor requested waivers for 11 candidates, primarily trial attorneys, investigators and analysts at the P-4, P-3 and P-2 levels. This was done on the basis that these personnel had gained unique knowledge of active cases and their service was required in order to ensure continuity. Furthermore, an exception was requested for legal officers working at the junior levels (P-3/P-2) in the Registrar's

Office to support the work of the Chambers. The basis of this request was, again, the need for continuity in the light of their experience on active cases and the ongoing work of specific Trial Chambers. It was also pointed out that without the approval of such an exception, the Tribunal would, at one time, lose the service of all 22 legal officers supporting the Chambers.

94. The Secretary-General approved a total of 17 exceptions in the light of the very special circumstances reported by the Tribunal, but upon the condition that the General Assembly be informed of these exceptional approvals. The Tribunal has reported that, as at the end of July 1998, offers of employment were issued and accepted by 12 of the subject personnel, 2 offers are pending and 3 persons declined acceptance.

D. Reporting on human resources management

95. The Secretary-General has noted the number and extent of the reports requested in General Assembly resolution 51/226, a number of which deal with detailed operational aspects of human resources management. He would take this opportunity to propose that future reports on all aspects of human resources management be subsumed within the framework provided by his major report on reform in this area. That report, to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, incorporates the strategy elaborated in 1994, as endorsed by the Assembly in its resolution 49/222 A of 23 December 1994, as well as the Secretary-General's further proposals on human resources management reform, and offers a coherent framework in which Member States could guide and advise the Secretary-General on the main aspects of strategy and policy in the development of the human resources of the Organization.

Notes

[1] A/C.5/49/5, Report of the Secretary-General on a strategy for the management of the human resources of the Organization of 21 October 1994; and A/C.5/51/34, Report of the Secretary-General on human resources management of 19 August 1996.

[2] A/51/950 and Add.1-6, Report of the Secretary-General on renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform of 4 July 1997.

[3] A/52/758, Report of the Secretary-General on reduction and refocusing of non-programme costs of 22 December 1997, paras. 21-24.

[4] Resolution 48/218 A.I, sect. E, paras. 4 and 5, of 23 December 1993; see also A/C.5/49/1, Report of the Secretary-General on the establishment of a transparent and effective system of accountability and responsibility of 5 August 1994.

[5] A/C.5/51/34, Report of the Secretary-General on the ratio between career and fixed-term appointments of 22 November 1996.

[6] A/51/533, para. 31.

[7] Ibid., para. 44.

[8] A/52/439, para. 17.

[9] A/52/30, chap. VI, sect. 3.